A

SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE

PRESENT TIMES,

AND PREACHED BY

T. STARKIE, *M.A.*

VICAR OF BLACKBURN,

THE FIRST OF JANUARY, 1793,

BEFORE THE

FRIENDLY SOCIETIES OF MECHANICS;

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The following Diſcourſe is not intended to meet the eye of learned criticiſm, as it has no pretenſions either to Novelty of Ideas, or Elegance of Language; it was written on ſhort notice for a plain and unlettered Audience, and is now publiſhed for the uſe of the lower claſſes of the people.

A

SERMON.

1 PETER ii. 13, 14.

Submit yourſelves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's ſake, whether it be to the King, as ſupreme; Or unto Governors, as unto them that are ſent by him for the puniſhment of evil doers, and for the praiſe of them that do well.

IN this Chapter St. Peter exhorts the early Chriſtians to the practice of ſeveral virtues, one of which is obedience to the Civil Magiſtrate. It is a great excellence of our holy Religion, and affords no contemptible argument for its truth, that it interferes not with the political inſtitutions of men. It does not even recommend any particular Form of Civil Government as the beſt, or the moſt convenient—but where Civil Government is eſtabliſhed, it requires ſubmiſſion to its ordinances for the Lord's ſake.

This precept of ſubmiſſion to the King, as ſupreme; or to Governors, as ſent by him, was given with peculiar propriety to the firſt Chriſtians, whoſe lot it was to be oppoſed, inſulted, and perſecuted by every reigning power on earth. All reſiſtance to the Civil Magiſtrate, on their part, muſt have been ineffectual. Beſides it pleaſed God, that Chriſtianity ſhould make its way in the world by humility, patience, and ſuffering, as well as by its internal excellence, and the ſuperintending power of Providence,

When every King was hoſtile to Chriſtianity, the Apoſtle's precept, "Honour the King," may be conſidered as a maxim of ſound Policy as well as of Religion. If ſo, the precept ſurely is not leſs binding on Chriſtians in thoſe countries, where the Chriſtian Religion is favoured and protected by the Civil Magiſtrate.

We are now too enlightened to believe, either that the Church ſhould be made a mere inſtrument of the ſtate, or that the ſtate

ſhould uſurp a power which is inconſiſtent with the natural, civil, or religious rights of men. The precept therefore of ſubmiſſion to the King, as ſupreme, muſt imply now, what it did in the Apoſtle's time, that the King exerciſes his power for the good of his ſubjects, and that thoſe who act under him are ſent "for the puniſhment of evil doers, and for the praiſe of them "that do well."

It would not ſuit the nature of a diſcourſe of this kind, or fall within the deſign of my preſent plan, to lay before you the general outlines of the Civil Conſtitution of this country—Nor is the taſk a very neceſſary one; for your own experience no leſs than the hiſtory of paſt ages bears ample teſtimony to the ſuperior excellence of the Britiſh Government. But as frequent attempts have been lately made to undermine and deſtroy this excellent ſyſtem of Government, it cannot be deemed either unſeaſonable or improper, to fix your attention on a ſubject which involves your deareſt intereſts both as men and as Chriſtians. You cannot be ignorant of the artifices which have been uſed, and the writings which have been publiſhed, againſt the King and his Government, by the foreign and domeſtic enemies to this country, to make you diſſatisfied with your condition in life, to inflame your paſſions, and urge you to promote their own wicked and ambitious deſigns. They tell you that you are injured, oppreſſed, deprived of your moſt valuable and juſt rights; in ſhort, that you are mere ſlaves and beaſts of burthen. How much truth there is in this language your own ſenſes and experience can beſt inform you. Your preſent happineſs, and the occaſion of the preſent meeting, are a full confutation of all ſuch baſe and inſidious declarations.

For the better information and ſatisfaction of your minds on this very important ſubject, it will be proper to conſider the arguments and reaſonings of thoſe ſeditious perſons, whoſe aim it is to overturn our Government, that they may raiſe themſelves and riot upon its ruins. Theſe arguments and reaſonings are comprehended in three words. "Rights of Men, Liberty, and Equality."

The expreſſion, "Rights of Men," has a very vague and general meaning: But they may be divided into *natural* and *civil*. The *Natural Rights* of men are ſuch as they would poſſeſs in a ſtate of nature, independent of one another, and not ſubject to any civil laws. The *Civil Rights* of Men are ſuch as they have in a ſtate of Civil Society.—As men cannot live together in a ſtate of ſociety, without ſome rules to govern their conduct, civil laws muſt, of courſe, lay them under ſome reſtraints, and abridge

abridge ſome of their natural Rights. But in all good Governments, theſe reſtraints are only ſuch as reaſon and expedience deem neceſſary for the general welfare.

The term "Liberty" is of the like import with "Rights of Men," and admits of the ſame diviſion into *natural* and *civil*. *Natural Liberty* may be defined to be "a freedom to act as any perſon living in a ſtate of nature thinks proper, without any regard to the happineſs of others." But Civil Liberty is regulated by Civil Laws, and means "a freedom in any perſon to act only in ſuch a manner as will not be injurious to the intereſt and happineſs of any other Member of the Community."

Permit me now to aſk you, If the Laws of England impoſe any reſtraints upon your actions, by which you are prevented from benefiting yourſelves, your families, or your friends? Has not every one of you a Right, a perfect Liberty, to ſtudy and exerciſe any art or trade he pleaſes; and if he ſhould fail in one attempt, is he not at liberty to make another? Your actions are not conſtrained by the circumſtances of place, time, or perſon. The laws of this land leave you at liberty to do whatever ſeems right in your own eyes, provided your conduct and example are not prejudicial to your neighbour or the State. A Liberty to do more than this, a Liberty to injure other men or the ſtate, would ſoon deſtroy all the bonds of civil Society; it would make the weak the prey of the ſtrong, and the ſimple the dupes of the deſigning. Such a Liberty would quickly degenerate into licentiouſneſs; it would be the worſt ſpecies of tyranny; it would reduce us at once to a ſtate of ſavage Nature, and involve every thing in diſorder and confuſion. A liberty like this, is what no wiſe or moderate man can poſſibly wiſh or deſire. The only Liberty which deſerves the name, and is worth poſſeſſing, is Civil Liberty, a Liberty properly reſtrained and regulated by Civil Laws. Such a Liberty every perſon in this Kingdom now has, and it is our duty and our intereſt to preſerve it ſacred and inviolate.

But it is the term "Equality" which has been the laſt adopted, as moſt likely to beguile the underſtanding, and impoſe on the credulity of the unwary multitude. That you may form more juſt ideas on the ſubject of Equality, it will be neceſſary to conſider it as it relates to us, firſt as Men, and afterwards as Citizens or Members of Society. As Men, in our natural capacity, and as we came out of the hands of our Maker, we are in many reſpects equal to one another. We all equally enjoy the bleſſings of life, air, and light; our bodies have the ſame general ſhape and ſtructure; we are all endued with immortal ſouls; it

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is the ſame Lord who made, preſerves, redeems, and will finally judge us; and we all have the ſame hopes and promiſes of future rewards. In theſe eſſential points there is a perfect equality among men. But in ſeveral other reſpects it has pleaſed the Almighty to make a great difference among them. In the particular form, proportion, ſize, ſtrength, and activity of their bodies, there is a wonderful and endleſs variety. Nor is the difference leſs remarkable in the powers and faculties of their underſtandings. The gifts of reaſon, reflection, judgment, memory, and imagination, are conferred on men in various degrees. Infinite almoſt is the difference between the enlightened and comprehenſive mind of a Newton or a Locke, and that of an Ideot. The paſſions alſo, and tempers of men, by which they are impelled to action, and on the due exerciſe and government of which, their health, their peace, and their happineſs in life chiefly depend, are no leſs diverſified than their intellectual and corporeal faculties. Thus has it pleaſed God to make a very material difference in the natural capacities and powers of men.

Are we to eſteem this inequality among the human ſpecies a blemiſh in the works of Creation? Moſt aſſuredly not. In the reſt of God's works, variety is deemed no inconſiderable perfection. The throne of God is ſurrounded with Myriads of miniſtering Spirits, of different ranks and orders. And whenever it ſhall be the happy lot of good men here on earth to be admitted into the realms above, there will ſtill be ſome ſubordination among them: for we are aſſured by the Son, that in his "Fa-"ther's Houſe there are many manſions." The Heavens we ſee are filled with innumerable ſtars, differing from each other in ſplendor and magnitude. The Earth is covered with flowers infinitely diverſified in their form, colour, fragrance, and uſe. And of all the various kinds of animals with which the globe is repleniſhed, we cannot diſcover two of the ſame ſpecies exactly reſembling one another. Even in inanimate matter there is a regular gradation from the dull clod to the brilliant diamond.

From this inequality in the natural frame and conſtitution of men, as great an inequality in their external condition and ſituation in life muſt, of neceſſity, ariſe. The one ſprings from the other, as the effect from its cauſe. The ſtrong, the diligent, the ſkilful, and the prudent, of courſe, will provide better for themſelves than the weak, the idle, the ignorant, and the improvident. The temperate and virtuous, according to the natural courſe of things, not only enjoy a better ſtate of health and more peace of mind, but they are generally more proſperous in their worldly affairs, than the intemperate and the guilty. Inequality then is the natural lot and condition of man; it is of God's own appointment.

appointment. And were we to ſuppoſe that all the wealth and power in the univerſe were once equally divided among men, unleſs God entirely changed their natures, or wrought a conſtant Miracle, the equality could not be preſerved for a ſingle day.

This natural inequality in the condition of men was deſigned by providence for the moſt important purpoſes—for purpoſes ſubſervient to the chief end of our exiſtence: it conſtitutes our trial and probation in this life. The inequality of the ſexes has its foundation in nature. They were formed for each other's ſolace and ſupport; and the duties—of protection in the ſtronger ſex, of ſubmiſſion in the weaker, and of mutual affection in both—reſt on a divine command.—The relation of Parent and Child is another of nature's diſtinctions, and gives riſe to thoſe reciprocal duties which ſpring from the tendereſt emotions of our breaſts. From the neceſſary relations of Maſter and Servant, Teacher and Scholar, Governor and Subject, are derived the various duties of authority, protection, ſubmiſſion, diligence, and fidelity.—The new-born infant, the ſick, the blind, and the feeble aged, without the care and attention of the ſtrong and healthy, would inevitably periſh. Hence the benevolent feelings of the heart are furniſhed with an opportunity of exerting themſelves on one ſide, and are anſwered by thoſe of gratitude on the other.—In ſhort, the ſtate of mankind is a ſtate of mutual wants and dependencies, and neceſſarily occaſions a great variety of moral and ſocial duties. On our obſervance of theſe duties, we find, from experience, that our happineſs, even in the preſent life, much depends: we are informed, from the higheſt authority, that our future intereſts will be entirely determined by it.

Civil Government cannot change the natural frame and capacities of men; and conſequently cannot make their external condition in life exactly the ſame. But Civil Government, by granting equal protection to all who are placed under its care, leſſens ſome of the inequalities which would exiſt in a ſtate of nature. It's object is by wiſe and ſalutary laws to curb the paſſions of the ambitious, the luſtful, and the revengeful; to protect the weak againſt the ſtrong and violent; to encourage induſtry by defending property; to promote the arts of peace and good will; and to ſecure all thoſe rights which would be often invaded with impunity in a ſtate of nature. Civil Government then is the peculiar friend of the weak, the poor, the virtuous, and the induſtrious Citizen. It gives him conſequence and reſpect; it advances his ſituation among his fellow-mortals; it not only places him on a level, but often raiſes him above thoſe, who, without civil laws to reſtrain them, would be his tyrants and oppreſſors.

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But if Civil Government leſſens ſome inequalities, it as neceſſarily creates others. Government cannot be ſupported without laws and offices; nor can laws be made or executed, or offices ſerved, without making ſome diſtinctions among the Citizens. It is abſurd to ſuppoſe that all men are equally qualified, or if they were, that they could all become Legiſlators, Governors, Judges, Generals, or Admirals. The great bulk of the people, in every nation, muſt be content to be private Citizens: and they ſhould never forget that civil and religious offices and diſtinctions are made, not for the benefit of thoſe who have them, but for the general good of the Community.

The Laws of England are peculiarly favourable to the Subjects at large. In this Kingdom no man is above the Laws, nor is any one beneath their notice. The lives, the liberty, and property of all, from the King down to the meaneſt beggar, are held by them in the ſame eſtimation. If any man is injured in his perſon, in his reputation, or his eſtate, the laws will grant him redreſs; for they protect and puniſh without reſpect of perſons. With us, civil and religious liberty go hand in hand. In bearing the public burthen, and ſupporting the Expences of Government, the Legiſlature of this Country is particularly attentive to the intereſts of the poor and loweſt claſſes of the people. When the public exigence requires it, ſuch taxes are always choſen as fall the heavieſt on thoſe, who can beſt afford to pay them: they are laid on the luxuries, rather than on the neceſſaries of life. And whenever the Finances of the nation admit, the firſt taxes which are taken off, are thoſe which bear the hardeſt on the common labouring people. There is perhaps no Country in the world, where a perſon, by his own diligence and abilities, may acquire ſo much wealth and honour as he can in this; or where ingenuity and merit are ſo ſure of being rewarded. The higheſt offices in the Church, the Law, the Army, and the Navy, are open to all ranks and orders of men: and many, perhaps moſt of theſe, are filled by perſons who have raiſed themſelves from low ſtations in life. If a man invents any uſeful inſtrument or machine, by which Philoſophy or Commerce can be improved, he is rewarded for his ingenuity, either by obtaining a Patent, or receiving a Gratuity, from Government. Even the Author of a Book has an excluſive right to the ſale of it for 14 Years, tho' the ideas it contains are divulged to the world as ſoon as it is publiſhed, and thereby made as common as the air we breathe. To promote learning and religion, there are ſchools founded at the expence of our Kings, or private Benefactors, in every part of the Kingdom. It reflects no little honour on the Engliſh Government, that it is ſcrupulouſly attentive to thoſe brave Veterans, who have fought and bled in their Country's ſervice. For the maimed

maimed and worn-out Soldier and Sailor, a very noble proviſion, during life, is made, and every attention paid to their health and comfort in thoſe princely Edifices of Chelſea and Greenwich. Nor are the loweſt claſſes of the people overlooked by the humane laws of this Country. A legal proviſion is made in every Pariſh for thoſe whoſe age, infirmities, and ſickneſs render them incapable of ſupporting themſelves and their families. To theſe general proviſions made by the laws, in behalf of the poor and ſick, let us add thoſe which the benevolent Spirit of Individuals has prompted them to make. In what other nation in the world are there ſo many Hoſpitals erected for the ſick, the lame, and the blind? There is hardly a County in this Kingdom, but what has one or more of theſe excellent inſtitutions.—Among theſe charitable eſtabliſhments, let us mention that of Sunday Schools, which are now become general throughout the Kingdom, and which lay the faireſt foundation for promoting the virtue and happineſs of the riſing Generation.—This Nation, if viewed in a commercial light, is not only without a Rival, but it's commercial intereſts, at this moment, are, perhaps, ſuperior to thoſe of all the other nations in Europe united together. In no other Country is there ſo much wealth flowing through ſo many channels of Trade and Manufactures. In no other Country can a labouring man earn ſo much money, and maintain ſo well himſelf, and his dependents.

It will appear, I truſt, from what has been ſaid, that in many reſpects men are and muſt be unequal to one another, both in their natural and civil capacities; and that the laws and inſtitutions of this country, by granting equal liberty and protection, are extremely favourable to all who have the happineſs to live under them.

Let us ſuppoſe, however, for a moment, what the friends and advocates for *Equality* by no means intend, that men, in oppoſition to the divine will, were made equal to one another in wealth, power, and other external advantages, and were kept ſo by mere force of human laws, Would ſuch an equality tend to their own happineſs or to that of the ſtate? I believe not. For ſuch an Equality would utterly deſtroy all labour and induſtry, and extinguiſh every ſpark of emulation and virtue. Who would ſtrive to excel his neighbour in any thing good or praiſe-worthy, if no tribute is to be paid, and no value ſet upon ſuperior worth and eminence? Upon this plan, Who would be induſtrious, when the fruits of his induſtry are to be wreſted from him? The arts of commerce and huſbandry would ſtand ſtill and be neglected. Manufactures cannot be carried on, to advantage, without large capitals in the hands of individuals. The Manufacturer

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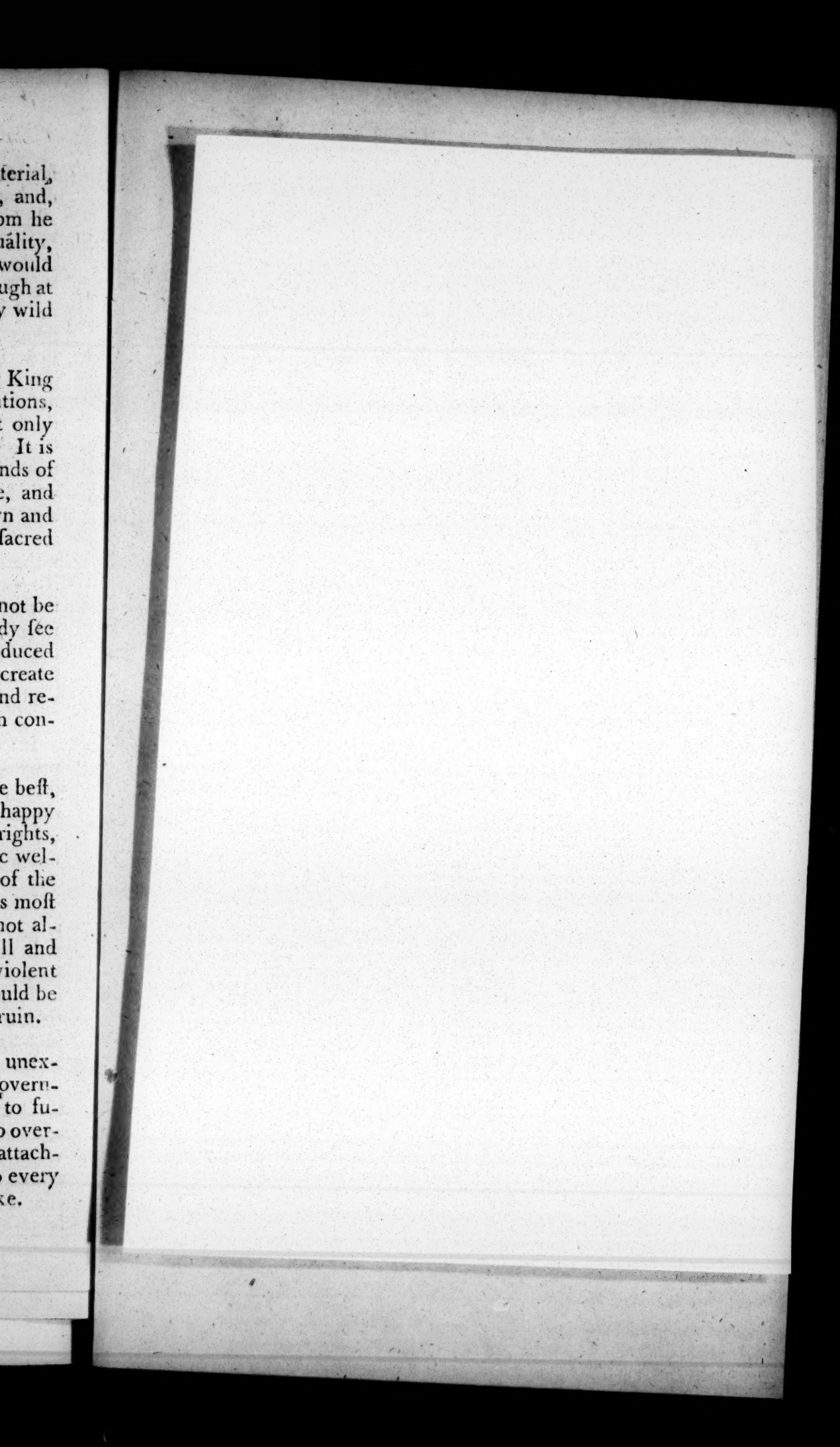
of large fortune is alone enabled to buy the raw material, and to ſell it, when manufactured, to the beſt advantage, and, of courſe, can afford to give the beſt wages to thoſe whom he employs in his Manufactory. But on the plan of Equality, theſe advantages would be loſt: the trade of this country would be ſoon engroſſed by neighbouring nations, who would laugh at our folly and madneſs in adopting a ſcheme ſo extremely wild and extravagant.

But you may depend upon it, that the Enemies to our King and Conſtitution, have nothing ſo remote from their intentions, as what the word *Equality* ſeems to denote. They uſe it only as a cloak to cover their own wicked and ſeditious views. It is a catch-word which they have adopted to miſlead the minds of the common people, ſeduce them from their allegiance, and render them the guilty inſtruments of deſtroying their own and the nation's happineſs, at the expence of every ſocial and ſacred obligation.

It is to be hoped that the good ſenſe of Engliſhmen will not be impoſed on by the ſound of words. Moſt of them already ſee thro' the artifice and fallacy of thoſe ſchemes, which, if reduced to practice, would ſet the Son at variance with his Father, create diſcord between the deareſt friends, cut off the ſinews and reſources of trade and commerce, and plunge the nation in confuſion and bloodſhed.

Be aſſured that the Government of this Country is the beſt, and the people who live under it the moſt flouriſhing and happy in the world: that as Members of Society they have all the rights, and all the liberty conſiſtent with their own and the public welfare: and that they all enjoy the protection and benefit of the ſame mild and equal laws. With regard to Equality in it's moſt extenſive ſenſe, the nature and conſtitution of man will not allow it; God never intended it; and if contrary to his will and the courſe of his Providence, it ſhould be effected by violent means, the foundation of all ſocial and moral virtues would be rooted up, and the nation involved in utter diſgrace and ruin.

If then, my Brethren, you are juſtly ſenſible of the unexampled bleſſings you enjoy under our preſent form of Government, you will endeavour to tranſmit them unimpaired to future ages, by reſiſting all the efforts of evil-minded men to overturn our Conſtitution, by perſevering in your loyalty and attachment to the beſt of Kings, and by ſubmitting yourſelves to every ordinance of man, both for your own, and the Lord's ſake.

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